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Fight for White

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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Ideas for deckbuilding can come from the strangest places. Inspiration can bubble up from [new cards](#), [weird cards](#), ["bad" cards](#), [accessible cards](#), and [flavor text](#). Sometimes, deck ideas can even come from the **Magic Pro Tour**.

For those of you who don't follow the hardcore competitive side of the game, Pro Tour - Osaka occurred [March 15-17](#). Two hundred seventy-seven people matched wits playing *Odyssey Block Constructed*. I write these articles fairly far in advance, so I can't benefit from the scintillating analysis written since March 17th. I have seen the decklists from the event, however, and one thing is glaringly obvious:

Very, very few people played white.

Observe: 2296 **Swamps**, 1630 **Forests**, 1533 **Islands**, 220 **Mountains**, and (drum roll)... 43 **Plains**. The number of **Deserted Temples**? Ninety-three, more than twice the number of **Plains**.

Indeed, the only white card to show up in any capacity was **Mystic Enforcer**, a gold card. Only four decks used other white cards. Wow. Our own Ben Bleiweiss sums up the phenomenon [quite nicely](#). In Osaka, there was simply no white in sight.

All of this information produces a powerful smell. It's a smell I can't quite place... no, wait... I think that's it... it smells kind of like... yes, in fact *exactly* like...

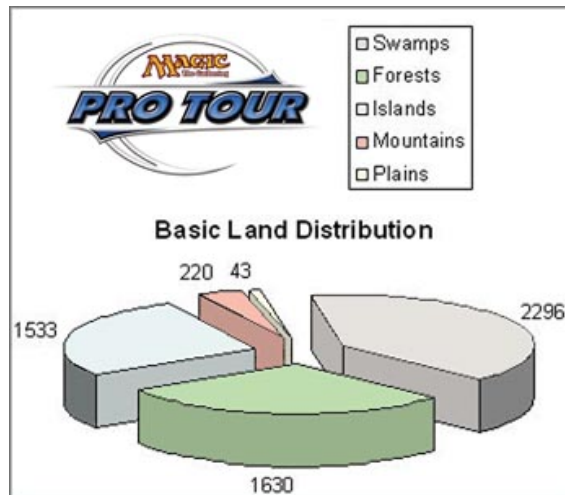
A challenge.

Green received the same diminished number of cards in *Torment* as white, and yet plenty of mono-green decks appeared in Osaka. White has access to good anti-black cards, and mono-black was one of the biggest decktypes around. So what's the deal? Is white really that unplayable?

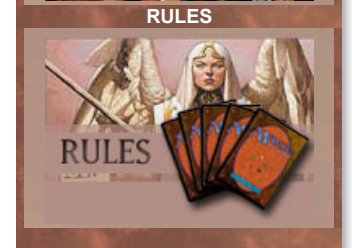
To the pros, the answer is clearly "yes." But you may decide to build Block decks with your friends, and I would hate for you to think of the format as primarily built around four colors.

Personally, hearing that no one wants to create a base white deck gets my innovative juices flowing. I simply refuse to believe that all 82 cards in a 478-card format are useless. It must be the Underdog in me.

Below are some opportunities I think exist in the realm of white for *Odyssey Block*. These decks may not have won in Osaka, but they just might surprise the heck out of your local gaming buddies. At the very least, they might inspire you to think closely about the recently forgotten color of **Magic**.



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WHITE WEENIE

White Weenie (WW) is arguably the oldest and most consistent deck archetype in **Magic's** history. The idea is to take little white dudes and beat your opponent with them. Usually the dudes get some help from a **Crusade**-like effect, first strike and protection from opposing colors. WW is the most obvious place to look for white deck ideas, and thus seems as good a place to start as any.

Low and behold, plenty of little white dudes appear in *Odyssey Block*; **Crusade** appears in the form of both **Pianna**, **Nomad Captain** and **Divine Sacrament**; **Patrol Hound** is a great example of a white first-striking weenie; and spells like **Devoted Caretaker**, **Mystic Crusader**, and **Shelter** offer plenty of protection. Although not a particularly inexpensive deck to build, WW appears alive and well.

The fun thing about WW decks is that, because of their straightforward design, you can splash another other color to fill your weaknesses. Daniel Steinsdorfer's deck in Osaka splashed blue for counterspells (**Rites of Refusal**) and card-drawing (**Breakthrough**) that also speed towards threshold. Green gives potential creature-enhancing effects like **Sylvan Might** along with goodies like **Wild Mongrel** and **Roar of the Wurm**. Black allows for creature removal via **Chainer's Edict** and disruption via **Mesmeric Fiend**, while red -- as always -- gives access to burn.

Here is how I might build a monowhite WW deck:



OBC WW

24 Plains

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 Devoted Caretaker | 4 Shelter |
| 4 Mystic Penitent | 4 Divine Sacrament |
| 4 Beloved Chaplain | 2 Vengeful Dreams |
| 4 Patrol Hound | |
| 4 Resilient Wanderer | |
| 3 Pianna, Nomad Captain | |
| 3 Lieutenant Kirtar | |

That is, as I said, the relatively obvious place to begin thinking about white. Yet numerous other white cards worth building decks around are currently feeling undervalued:

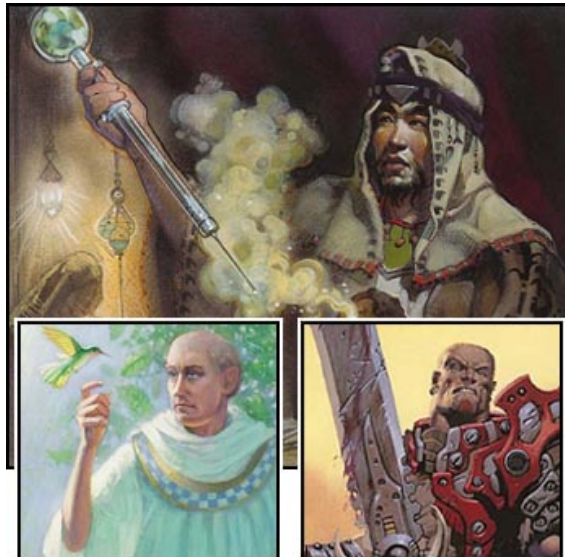
MASTER APOTHECARY

The more clerics, the more annoying your deck becomes with **Master Apothecary**. Versus green and red decks especially, the Apothecary can be hugely frustrating. What I particularly like about him is that his ability can be used the same turn he comes into play.

The problem inherent in a **Master Apothecary** deck is clear: All of those clerics may be good at preventing damage, but they suck at dealing it. How the heck is an army of clerics going to kill your opponent?

As with any deckbuilding challenge, there are probably several ways to sort through a win condition. You could splash blue for **Iridescent Angel** or green for **Mystic Enforcer**. **Overrun** would be a funny way to end the game. For those people who scoff at fast games, **Ambassador Laquatus** would allow for a **Millstone** strategy.

I've focused below on a recurring way to deal damage. **Caustic Tar** would fit here, but I like the idea that **Kamahl, Pit Fighter** can be protected by the Apothecary and his gang. Splashing red also allows for a small amount of burn to make its way in the deck, further shortening the game. The deck avoids any chase rares, which is great.



Bald Men

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 4 Tarnished Citadel | 4 Confessor | 4 Shelter |
| 16 Plains | 4 Devoted Caretaker | 3 Ray of Distortion |
| 4 Mountain | 4 Beloved Chaplain | 3 Liquid Fire |
| | 4 Master Apothecary | |

4 Blessed Orator
4 Teroh's Faithful
2 Kamahl, Pit Fighter

CANTIVORE

I seem to be obsessed with the *Odyssey* 'Vores. I can't help but think of decks built around each one. *Cantivore* is hands down the most difficult one to use, but that just adds to the challenge.

Some white cards in *Odyssey* Block make sense in a *Cantivore* deck: *Auramancer* has great interactions with enchantments. *Kirtar's Desire* slows down creatures and becomes a *Pacifism* at just about the time when you would like your *Cantivore* to attack. *Testament of Faith* is mana-hungry, but is essentially a good wall. *Strength of Isolation* is decent if you think you will have enough creatures in your deck to suitably enchant. And then there's *Karmic Justice*, which turns anyone wanting to kill your tasty enchantments into a puddle of mush.

Unfortunately, that's probably not enough meat for a monowhite deck. But wait! Other colors have enchantments too! Imagine green with *Still Life* and *Squirrel Nest*. Imagine black with *Zombie Infestation* and the aforementioned *Caustic Tar*. Imagine a kooky red land-destruction deck with *Price of Glory*, *Steam Vines*, *Pyromania*, and *Burning Sands*.

Or, maybe just imagine blue along these lines:

Canta-Aura-Phanta

2 Skycloud Expanse	4 Auramancer	4 Kirtar's Desire
14 Plains	4 Cantivore	4 Testament of Faith
8 Island	3 Phatatog	4 Standstill
		4 Karmic Justice
		4 Persuasion
		3 Think Tank
		2 Strength of Isolation

BALANCING ACT

If you've played a Type 2 tournament recently, you may have seen a nasty deck that revolves around the combination of *Balancing Act*, *Terravore*, *Obliterate*, and *sacrificial lands*. The idea is to destroy your own lands in casting *Balancing Act* so that your opponent loses all his permanents, and then drop a gargantuan *Terravore* with floating mana. Pretty neat idea.

Since the key cards are both in *Odyssey* Block, might as well try the same tricks. The *sacrificial lands* and *Obliterate* are gone in *Odyssey* Block, but the addition of *Thaumatog* and cheap cantrips still make the core combination feasible. Something like:

Tightrope

11 Forest	4 Werebear	4 Sungrass Egg
10 Plains	4 Terravore	4 Insist
	4 Thaumatog	4 Life Burst
		4 Shelter
		4 Far Wanderings
		4 Balancing Act
		3 Kirtar's Wrath

ANIMAL BONEYARD

Okay, *Animal Boneyard* might not immediately jump out as a "card to build a deck around." I mostly think it is spiffy with graveyard reanimation in general and *Dawn of the Dead* in particular. With *Dawn of the Dead*, you can not only have your creatures back every turn by sacrificing them before they get removed from the game, but you can gain more life than you lose. Imagine *Hypnox* attacking time and again while you gain 8 life a turn! Yeehaw!

Other tricks probably exist with the Boneyard too. **Tireless Tribe** can get ridiculous, for example. But here is the reanimation deck I would build:

The Boneyard		
4 Tainted Field	4 Tireless Tribe	4 Zombie Infestation
10 Swamp	4 Auramancer	4 Animal Boneyard
9 Plains	4 Teroh's Faithful	4 Zombify
	4 Faceless Butcher	4 Dawn of the Dead
	2 Ichorid	
	1 Wayward Angel	
	1 Iridescent Angel	
	1 Hypnox	

These are examples of ways you can prove to your friends that white isn't quite dead yet. Other examples abound: Make a **Reborn Hero-Devastating Dreams** deck, a **Major Teroh-Alter Reality** deck, or even a deck built around **Soulcatcher**, **Transcendence**, or **Graceful Antelope**. Show everyone that mono-black, squirrels, and blue-green madness may be powerful choices, but they can't quite compete with **Possessed Nomad**.

If a color is being grossly underutilized, I fully expect you people to make things right. So lighten up, think bright thoughts and play white, dangit!

Until next week,

-j

Some "lite" white decks:

Swedish G/W <i>Lite!</i>		
12 Forest	4 Basking Rootwalla	4 Chatter of the Squirrel
10 Plains	4 Tireless Tribe	4 Strength of Isolation
	4 Patrol Hound	4 Sylvan Might
	4 Wild Mongrel	4 Roar of the Wurm
	4 Anurid Scavenger	
	4 Arrogant Wurm	

Sky Blue <i>Lite!</i>		
10 Island	4 Mystic Penitent	4 Breakthrough
10 Plains	4 Mystic Familiar	4 Aether Burst
	4 Aquamoeba	4 Rites of Refusal
	4 Mystic Visionary	4 Standstill
	4 Patrol Hound	4 Strength of Isolation

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